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ABSTRACT

Within an historical and theoretical framework, this book explores the inherent tension that exists between educational experts and laypeople. The book offers an overview of policy levels and participants involved. Then it examines the policy-making process in local school districts, including proposal development, executive recommendation, legislative action, decision-making, and policy implementation. Recruitment of school administrators and the relationship of the community to the school board follow. The book ends with a history of the reform movement in educational governance. (Author/LD)

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The Politics of Educational Governance: An Overview

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Besides processing documents and journal articles, the Clearinghouse has another major function—information analysis and synthesis. The Clearinghouse prepares bibliographies, literature reviews, state-of-the-knowledge papers, and other interpretive research studies on topics in its educational area.

Foreword

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management is pleased to add to its state-of-the-knowledge series this bibliographic essay on the politics of educational governance. The authors originally prepared the manuscript as part of a grant proposal on conflict management and local politics submitted to the National Institute of Education.

At the time the essay was written, Harvey J. Tucker was a research associate in the Center for Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon. He is now assistant professor of political science at Texas A & M University. L. Harmon Zeigler is a research associate in the Center and professor of political science at the University of Oregon.

Both authors previously collaborated in writing *Professionals Versus the Public* (Longman, 1980) and *Quest for Responsive Government* (Duxbury Press, 1978).

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1.
Introduction

Only within the past decade has educational policy-making come to be widely recognized as a political process. If systematic studies of educational decision-making are still rare, it is because students of politics have traditionally directed their attention toward the more obviously political institutions of society such as political parties, interest groups, the courts, and legislatures.

There is certainly no reason to argue that schools are not political. Even when nobody noticed them, they were performing distinctly political functions, for school districts have always been involved in decisions concerning taxation and distribution of public resources.[1] The past decade of student protests, teacher strikes, and taxpayers' revolts has thrown the schools into a sharper political focus. Conflict episodes—especially those involving significant public participation—have drawn attention to the political nature of educational policy-making at all levels of government.

The source of turmoil has, in most cases, been the inability of schools to respond to the changing needs of students and the larger community. Indeed, the National Institute of Education (NIE) has recently described American primary and secondary education as a system "unable to renew itself by responding rapidly, confidently, and openly to diverse client needs and expectations."[2] The recent trend toward increasing voter rejection of school finance referenda, the acceptance in California of the Jarvis-Gann constitutional limitation on property taxes, and the apparent movement toward emulating the Jarvis-Gann measure in other states suggest that citizens agree with NIE's critical assessment of educational services and are also dissatisfied with other governmental programs.

Why are experts and laymen dissatisfied with public schools in America? To what extent is the dissatisfaction unique to educational services? To what extent is the dissatisfaction part of a generalized negative perception of government?

These questions need to be explored within a historical context and within a theoretical framework that emphasizes the inherent tension between experts and laymen. The historical context is the reform movement in local politics, a movement that profoundly altered the institutional framework within which

educational and municipal policies were developed and implemented. By retaining the symbolic accoutrements of participation while enhancing the actual influence of bureaucratic professionals, the reform movement contributed to the tension upon which we remarked.

2.
Policy Levels and Participants

School policy is made by a variety of participants at all levels of government. The federal government—though it does not usually provide direct financial support—affects lower education through such activities as subsidizing teacher training, giving aid to federally impacted areas, supporting demonstration and innovative projects, providing the "hot lunch" program, sponsoring research, and overseeing such controversial national policies as desegregation. State legislatures finance education to the tune of between 20 and 50 percent of the educational expenditure of local school districts. State boards of education establish—to a greater or lesser degree depending on the state—curriculum and text requirements and certification procedures. Local boards of education and superintendents are legally in charge of the basic educational program of a district. School principals must interpret districtwide policy, and the classroom teacher (in most cases effectively shielded by the classroom door) must instruct within the guidelines established by this multilayered decisional apparatus.

Despite evidence of growing nationalization, most important routine and episodic decisions still seem to be made at the local level.[3] Although demands for decentralization and community control are increasing, American schools, compared with those of other Western nations, are decentralized. Out of a variety of diffuse historical trends (including the Pilgrims' deep commitment to localism), the "traditional" American pattern of school governance emerged: a weak state education department providing limited leadership to a very large number of local units.[4] Despite the decline in the number of districts, this pattern remains intact. Our discussion of educational decision-making will therefore concentrate on local school districts.

The differentiation of hierarchical levels is a helpful initial step in the process of narrowing down our examination. We also need to know who is usually most active in local decision-making. Obviously the school board and superintendent are consistently involved. Additionally, however (again, in various degrees), so are organized interest groups, teachers, students, and informal community power elites. Although this list is not exhaustive, it does include the most visible participants.

Common sense and empirical evidence indicate that the influence of specific participants in a decision varies with, among other things, the nature of the decision. School systems, like all organizations, must make decisions of diverse magnitudes and impacts. School district authority is invoked to decide educational programs, salary levels of custodial employees, and the purchase of office supplies. Organizational theorists have attuned themselves to the problem of types of decisions with varying degrees of clarity. In all cases, the goal is to classify decisions along a continuum ranging from almost purely routine to those that fundamentally alter goals. Downs, for example, uses the notion of "depth of change." Minor changes in everyday behavior can be made without changing organizational goals. However, new organizational purposes require (theoretically) changes in day-to-day behavior.[5] A similar, if dichotomous, distinction is offered by Agger, Goldrich, and Swanson:

> An *administrative* demand or decision-making process is regarded by its maker or participants as involving relatively routine implementation of a prior, more generally applicable decision; it implicates relatively minor values of a relatively few people at any one time and has "technical" criteria available to guide the technically trained expert in selecting one or another outcome as *the* decision. A *political* demand or decision-making process is thought to involve either an unusual review of an existing decision or an entirely new decision; it implicates relatively major values of a relatively large number of people and has value judgments or preferences as the major factors in determining selection by "policy-makers" of one or another outcomes as *the* decision.[6]

As applied specifically to schools, Martin has distinguished between "internal" (administrative) and "public" (political) decisions.[7]

Most decisions made in school districts are administrative, routine, or internal. As we shall argue, the routinization of decision has considerable impact on the influence of various participants.

When two or more participants are vying for decisive influence over the same outcome, the exchange of resources is similar to primitive economic bargaining. In the situation under consideration here, for instance, formal control of educational policy rests with the school board. The board appoints the superintendent and may remove him or her at any time. The superintendent

is an administrative officer similar to a city manager.[8] In most instances, the school board is the elected representative body speaking for the public. Even when the board is appointed, its function is still representative.

However, as is too easily the case when elected officials confront their administrative employees, the legal and the actual distribution of influence vary considerably. Frequently, the resources of the superintendent are of sufficient value to cause the board to defer to him in the actual establishment of authority. The "rank" authority of the board loses out to the "technical" authority of the superintendent.[9] Clearly, if school boards were to maximize their fundamental resources—formal authority—there would be no question of their supremacy.

Another potential school board resource is representative responsibility. From the normative view of lay control of education, school boards speak for the people. In a society in which symbols associated with popular sovereignty have such high salience, the mere *act* of representation is a potential resource. If the school board is perceived—at least by the superintendent—as being a potential mobilizer of various publics, its power is enhanced. The amount of public, or external, support available to a board varies with several factors, including the recruitment pattern of a particular board, the visibility of the board to its publics, and the salience of, and satisfaction with, educational policy.

Although legal authority and representative function are the most universal of the potential resources available to school boards, others may exist in specific districts. In their study of a rural community in upstate New York, for instance, Vidich and Bensman discovered that the school board was closely allied with prevailing community elites.[10] Others have found this to be the case in communities characterized by homogeneous elite desires and preferences.[11] The whole question of utilization of political elites by school boards is complex and needs further research efforts. Early studies suggested that major educational decisions were shaped directly by "prime movers" in the community. Hence, school boards could mobilize key members of the power system to do battle (if need be) with the superintendent. By the same token, small groups of lay people influential in local politics were said to set the major policies of the educational system. We suggest that the political elites of a community may—depending on the issue, the community, the style of the board—be unavail-

able as a board resource.

The superintendent's potential resources are more limited but potentially more effective in an exchange. His primary resource is his professional reputation for expertise in education. The exchange between bureaucratic experts and elected laymen is hardly unique to school boards. The most obvious analogies are the exchanges between city councils and city managers and between legislative committees and executive departments. The medium of bargaining is similar in all these situations, yet the resources of the superintendent of schools are both unique and puzzling. We have a tradition of "lay control." The existence of local school boards—almost uniquely American—attests to this tradition. In contrast with, say, the British, Americans believe that laymen should influence educational policy-making. Simultaneously, however, we accord greater deference to superintendents than is accorded most other public professionals.[12] This curious ambivalence actually strengthens the value of expertise, because there are virtually no institutional controls on superintendents other than accountability to the board. Superintendents, then, use their expertise in a disguised fashion, insisting that they are held in check by an alert board while attempting to establish a monopoly on technical skills and information. As Minar notes:

> The technical expert, the district superintendent, is likely to flourish in these community settings where expertise and division of labor are assigned intrinsic value. . . . Where his "employers" on the board and in the community trust and value *expertise* [the superintendent] is likely to have much more discretion and initiative, right up to the highest policy level.[13]

The claim for expert status by the superintendent is buttressed by another belief that can be used as a resource to evade lay control: the separation of education and politics and the consequent insulation of educational decision-making from broader-based political conflict. As will be discussed later, the reforms of 1890-1910 (initiated in response to the growing influence of urban political machines) produced a convention that is still intact among administrators: the separation of policy-making from administration and the concentration of authority in the office of the superintendents.

Keeping schools out of politics also meant minimizing the legitimacy of political conflict and hence the legitimacy of outside influence as represented by pressure groups.[14] In contrast to such overtly political bodies as state legislatures or city councils,

school boards and administrators define pressure groups as outside the proper influence system.[15] The normal resource of an interest group is the perception of its legitimacy by a decision-maker.[16] Admittedly, perceptions of legitimacy vary from group to group and issue to issue, but most politicians generally assume that groups have a right to be heard. Superintendents do not share in this assumption.[17] Further, it has been found that only about half the school board members accept the legitimacy of group-originated demands.[18] When the claim for expertise is successful, interest-group influence will be minimal, as in New York:

> In the last two decades, education in New York City has become amazingly insulated from political and public controls. One could accurately describe the situation as an abandonment of public education by key forces of political power within the City. . . . Weber's theory of the emergence of a specialized bureaucracy monopolizing power through its control of expertise characterizes the role of the education bureaucracy in New York City. The claim that only professionals can make competent judgments has been accepted. Civic and interest groups have responded ambivalently. On the one hand they accept the notion of the professional competence of the bureaucracy, but at the same time express a hopelessness regarding their ability to change the system.[19]

To a lesser degree, teachers suffer from a comparable denial of legitimacy. They are *employees* of the school district. Employees, in the official argument, have a right to be heard but not to participate. If teachers accept the employee role, their organizational influence will be minimal. Similarly, students and parents have not yet been accorded a legitimate voice as the consumers of the educational product. They are accorded considerably less voice than consumers normally exercise. They are not free to "vote with their feet." Schooling is compulsory, and it is monopolized by a single public agency. Hence, consumers can exercise few options, unlike consumers in a free market. Because their choices are limited, their resources are largely confined to protest. Protest normally isolates the protesters from sources of power, thus proving to be an inefficient mechanism.[20]

3.
The Policy-Making Process in Local School Districts

We turn now to a consideration of the normal policy-making process in local school districts. The focus will be on participation in the governing process. The notion of a cycle of policy-making composed of discrete sequential steps will organize our discussion of participation in local educational governance.[21]

The policy-making process can be thought of in terms of six successive steps: proposal development, executive recommendation, legislative action, supplementary decision, implementation, and review. With some modification, the six-step process can describe the normal decision-making process in all levels of government. Different actors participate at the different steps. As a result, at each step there are different modes of decision-making and different opportunities for direct public participation and indirect public influence.

Proposal Development

Proposal development begins when the need for action is articulated and one or more policy alternatives are suggested. Proposal development can originate with either governmental or nongovernmental individuals or groups within the educational system, or it can originate outside a specific decision-making unit. Indeed, many of the problems currently encountered by local school districts are the result of proposal development occurring at the federal level. Whatever the source, however, proposal development invariably requires that preferences be translated into *demands* that require a *response*. Hence, the question of responsiveness can be understood as an inquiry into which of the variety of demands placed on a school system are selected for a response.

Proposal development is making a communication to school district officials that they can understand and take action on. Thus, proposal development is setting the agenda (which demands shall be responded to), a formal commitment by the school district to consider particular policy alternatives.

Agenda-setting is the opening round in the struggle for influ-

ence, and by no means an inconsequential one. In Schattschneider's view, control of the agenda is analogous to, say, choice of a battleground in war. A group or individual will always select a battleground that provides the advantage.[22]

In education, participation in agenda-setting is largely in the control of a professional monopoly, with minimum involvement by the school board or the public. In about two-thirds of the districts surveyed in two national studies, the superintendent (and, in some cases, his or her staff) was solely responsible for setting the formal agenda for board meetings.[23] We define agenda-setting as the introduction of a topic for discussion at board meetings.

Although the parliamentary agenda document is controlled exclusively by school administrators and board members in most school districts, this less restrictive definition makes it possible for all actors to participate in setting the agenda. Indeed, district patrons and the general public are always invited to attend school board meetings and make their views known. The distribution of discussion initiation among our six potential participants in school district decision-making is presented in table 1.

TABLE 1. **Agenda-Setting at School Board Meetings (in percentages)**

Agenda-setter	*Mean*	*Low*	*High*
Superintendent	47	18	73
Central administrative staff	19	1	43
School board	24	9	57
Other professionals	3	2	9
Public	7	1	33
Other governments	*	0	1

*Less than 1 percent.

Even by this most liberal definition of agenda-setting, educational professionals dominate all other actors. On the average, superintendents initiate nearly half of all discussions; educational professionals account for nearly 70 percent of the agenda. School board members control 24 percent of agendas, members of the public 7 percent, and representatives of other governments less than 1 percent.

The direct agenda-setting of school board policy-making is

quite insulated from those outside the school establishment. Clearly, the administration occupies a powerful gatekeeping position. The administration is in a position to establish an agenda that will minimize controversy and maximize routine decision-making. That is, superintendents and other professionals can set an agenda that, because it emphasizes technical problems, requires administrative, rather than board, resolution. Thus, Boyd asserts that "many, perhaps even most, school administrators are inclined to be cautious in their policy initiations and reluctant to test the boundaries of their influence."[24] It is highly significant, from our perspective, that whether or not Boyd is empirically correct he concedes the control of the agenda to the administration.

The matter merits further consideration. In addition to the problem of a public body, the school board, yielding its agenda-setting authority to its nominal employee, the superintendent, one wonders how much public participation can be initiated when the public enters the game after the issues have been defined.

The insulation of nonprofessionals from direct participation in the proposal development step should not be taken as evidence of a conspiracy. The public's knowledge of schools is substantially less than that of school authorities. When asked to do so, one-third of the public could not name any problems facing their school district. Among those who noted problems, most people could cite but one. Among this segment, the problem was generally vague and diffuse (for example, "bad teachers"). In contrast, school authorities cite problems with much greater certainty, specificity, and frequency.[25] Clearly, then, the mass public has little more than a rudimentary knowledge of the issues or, more important, the potential issues, within their schools.

The generally low level of public knowledge should not be equated with disinterest. Some evidence suggests that the public would like to know more about education, provided it has access to information. Moreover, the high level of community involvement in isolated, episodic issues, such as sex education, the teaching of evolution or creation, school prayer, and busing to achieve racial equality, suggests a substantial reservoir of public interest, though it is only occasionally manifest. The key is the constraint placed on the mass public in responding to selected, developed issues rather than participating in the generation of issues. To illustrate, of all the potential issues that might arise

within the schools, perhaps the most important are those concerning the very substance of schools: the educational program, or curriculum. Indeed, all other issues are in some sense secondary to this fundamental issue. Yet, to the mass public, issues relating to the educational program have a very low salience. Fewer than one in thirty people cite problems directly or even generally concerning the educational program. In contrast, school board members and superintendents cite curriculum problems with up to fifteen times greater frequency.[26] The gap in saliency occurs because members of the mass public do not have the expertise to discuss or resolve most curriculum issues. They lack, for example, the vocabulary educational professionals and school board members employ in their consideration of curriculum. The problem is not one of disinterest, but of frozen access.

According to traditional democratic theory, political influence—in this case agenda-setting—follows lines of legal authority. The public elects a school board to make policy. The board appoints a superintendent to administer policy. Thus, administrators follow the mandates of legislators who follow the instructions of their constituents. The major source of power is electoral support, and the norm of policy-making is responsiveness to public demands and preferences. This model suggests frequent participation in agenda-setting by school board members and other laymen. Yet, at least in the formal meetings of school boards, this is not the case.

Another perhaps more apt model focuses on professional expertise as the essential element in decision-making. In this chain of influence the major source of power is information; the norm is deference to expertise. Problems are brought to the attention of the school board by the publicly proclaimed experts: superintendents and their staff.

This role of the public in proposal development under this latter model has been discussed in a variety of recent essays on "administrative representation."[27] Because the superintendent is the dominant policy actor, he or she can, through a variety of informal contacts, adequately represent the public to the board.[28] Despite obvious problems with traditional democratic theory, such a notion is intriguing in its realism. After all, if the superintendent *is* in fact representing the diverse community needs, then the relative quiescence of the public and of school boards is of no concern. Perhaps superintendents receive sufficient communication from the public in forums other than public

meetings to represent their desires and preferences for them. Our research casts doubt on this sanguine view.

Superintendents do receive a considerable number of private communications concerning school policy. The number of private communications made to superintendents is disproportionately greater than the sum of private communications received by any individual board member. The private communications to board members in total normally exceed that of the superintendent, but the superintendent receives far more private communications than any other single individual. Most significantly, nearly all privately articulated demands occur *after* the presentation of an agenda item. Superintendents tend to communicate with groups and individuals with a decidedly "establishment" tinge.[29]

Most communications support a position announced by the superintendent. Eighteen percent of the private communications received by the superintendents in our study were in disagreement, 34 percent were in agreement, and the remainder were either neutral or without issue content. This finding is consistent with numerous other examinations of the private communications of public decision-makers. On the basis of this evidence, it seems fair to conclude that, if superintendents hear largely from supportive constituents, their representative net is rather small. As a substitute for public dialogue, private communication is inadequate.

To sum up the proposal development phase of our model: (1) proposal development is clearly dominated by superintendents; (2) the active role of school boards and members of the public is substantially below that indicated by traditional democratic theory; (3) though superintendents receive a sufficient volume of private communications to make a model of administrative representation plausible, the quality of those communications does not support a democratic model of administrative representation.

Executive Recommendation

The executive recommendation step consists of interaction between the source of a proposal and the office of the chief executive, deliberation and consideration of the proposal and alternatives, and recommendation of a policy to the legislative body. When proposal development originates within the execu-

tive branch—the norm in school districts—the interaction consists of negotiation between the executive office and the initiating department. When proposals originate within government but outside the executive branch, with other governments, or with nongovernmental individuals and groups, executive agency personnel are included in executive recommendation deliberations as expert consultants. Whatever the origin of a policy proposal, the goal of the executive recommendation step is to eliminate "bad" proposals and to modify "good" proposals to make them relevant, effective, and (perhaps most important) acceptable to all parties.

In educational governance, executive recommendations are expected and honored. Indeed, it appears only reasonable that those who set the agenda should also recommend appropriate policy actions. As studies of municipal, state, and federal government show, the dominance of executive recommendations hardly makes school district governance unique. Superintendent preferences are explicit, on the average, for 66 percent of the votes taken by school boards. The frequency and importance of executive recommendations stem from a variety of sources.

The most important reason for executive recommendations by school district superintendents is to make use of their professional expertise. Although superintendents act as the chief executives of government units, their basic resource is expertise rather than more traditional political skills (such as bargaining). It is a curious anomaly in American popular attitudes that while the concept of local lay control of schools is so highly valued, the educational expert is accorded greater deference than perhaps any other professional in public life. As a recent survey concluded, "if the apparent weight of public opinion had its way, school boards would lose much of their present authority."[10] Schools of high quality are universally desired, and the quality of the educational program is thought to be best assured by placing it under the control of an expert.

Superintendents are called on to make policy recommendations because they will ultimately be charged with implementing decisions. Their opinions are sought, not only to tap expertise, but also to include consideration of policy execution. Policy execution is extremely important because school boards must, of necessity, grant wide latitude to chief executives in the actual implementation of the programs they pass. Even more than other legislative bodies, school board members are part-time, amateur,

and volunteer officials. They have neither the resources nor the time to pass legislation in such detail that administration is merely following instructions. Executive review gives superintendents an opportunity to explain how they intend to follow through after the school board acts.

Superintendents are also called on to make policy recommendations because they are the only actors who are presumed to be overseeing an integrated program. Other actors seek actions in limited spheres. While all assert that the interests of the children come first, administrators, teachers, parents, and other groups enter the policy-making process when their own interests are at stake. The superintendent is expected to weigh conflicting input from segments of the school district and to present a balanced, comprehensive program. Because school boards are part-time, amateur, and volunteer bodies, they must rely on the superintendent to present a program that does not contain elements that are mutually exclusive or in conflict and that are appropriate to the district's financial and personnel resources.

Executive recommendations are also sought from superintendents because they enjoy significant political power in the traditional sense. The superintendent is the single most visible representative of the school system. The average citizen can more readily name his superintendent of schools than his United States congressman, to say nothing of elected school board members. Unlike individual board members, administrators, principals, teachers, or parents, the superintendent's constituency is the entire school district. The mass popular identification of government with its chief executive makes the superintendent the "tribune of the people." Although they are not popularly elected, superintendents have a base of popular and elite support that they can use as a resource in the decision-making process.

Contrary to the professional maxim that superintendents should not engage in politics, superintendents are political actors with political powers. As in other units of government, school district governance involves conflict. For many superintendents, political conflict presents a crucial paradox: when conflict occurs, the technical skills so diligently developed not only are of no value, they are a liability. Trained in the tenets of an ideology that defines conflict as pathological and consensus as the most legitimate basis of a decision, superintendents may find conflict more painful than other executive officers. A defensive, hostile response to criticism may then generate more intense conflict.

Thus, superintendents with doctorate degrees (the most ideologically committed) and little on-the-job experience (which mediates the negative influence of education) are able to manage conflict with more skill.[31]

The basic resource of the superintendent, his expertise, is not accepted as negotiable. Because superintendents rely on expertise rather than more traditional political skills, the power base of the superintendent is destroyed when this resource is declared inapplicable. It is no surprise that issues such as busing and school closures made necessary by declining enrollments, which cannot be solved by technical skills, are troublesome to superintendents. As American schools move from an era of expanding resources to one of scarce resources, the essentially political issue of resource distribution will become dominant. School boards will continue to turn to superintendents for recommendations. Superintendents must use both their political and technical resources as the task of conflict management becomes more prominent in school district governance.

Legislative Action

Legislative action is the process of making authoritative decisions concerning the items of the policy agenda. Public school board meetings are the arena for formal decisions after superintendent and staff set the agenda and recommend a policy alternative.

The primary function of legislative sessions of school boards is decision-making. As table 2 summarizes, our study of school board meetings found that an average of nearly three-fourths of all discussions are intended to be concluded with some sort of formal decision. As the wide range in the proportion of discussions intended for decision indicates, school boards differ in the character of their legislative sessions. Some boards combine

TABLE 2. **Purpose and Resolution of Discussions at School Board Meetings (in percentages)**

	Mean	*Low*	*High*
Decision intended	74	47	97
Decision reached when intended	90	58	99
Decision by vote	86	72	97

decision-making and public hearing functions; others conduct separate meetings for public hearings.

Table 2 also shows that school boards successfully reach decisions when they intend to do so and that the vast majority of decisions are made by a formal vote. In other words, when boards begin discussion with the intention of reaching a decision (as opposed to a mere discussion), they do not become so bogged down in conflict that they cannot reach a decision.

We have already seen that superintendents and their staff members dominate agenda-setting for school board meetings. However, school boards permit and encourage participation from all six potential participants during their legislative sessions. Tables 3 through 6 summarize participation at legislative sessions of school boards.

In table 3 the unit of analysis is the discussion; the percentages given represent the proportion of discussions in which at least one member of a category of actors made at least one statement. As one would expect, school board participation is nearly universal. Superintendents participate, on the average, in less than half the discussions (the range is from 24 to 71 percent). Central administrative staff participate in 35 percent and other professionals in 17 percent of the discussions. A member of the "school establishment" participates in virtually every discussion. The "outsiders" are the public and representatives of other governments; they participate, on the average, in one of five discussions.

TABLE 3. **Participation in Discussions at School Board Meetings (in percentages)**

	Mean	*Low*	*High*
School board	94	84	100
Superintendent	43	24	71
Central administrative staff	35	18	63
Other professionals	17	11	25
Public	20	6	42
Other governments	1	*	2

*Less than 1 percent.

Another definition of participation is shown in table 4, where the unit of analysis is the statement. For each group of actors the entry is the percentage of all statements made at school

board meetings. Again, a picture of school officials talking among themselves emerges. Less than 10 percent of all statements are made by the public and government officials.

TABLE 4. Proportion of Statements Made at School Board Meetings (in percentages)

	Mean	*Low*	*High*
School board	60	47	74
Superintendent	12	7	18
Central administrative staff	14	7	28
Other professionals	6	4	9
Public	9	2	16
Other governments	*	*	1

*Less than 1 percent.

A low level of public participation is only partially demonstrated by these data. Equally important is *what* is said. If public participation, albeit infrequent, is visibly policy-laden, then the low aggregate participation may be misleading. Demand articulation from nonofficial sources is a key ingredient in democratic political theory. Political scientists typically assume a model of governance that begins with the articulation, usually through organizational activity, of preferences. Hence, the response to such requests is a key variable in evaluating the performance of public bodies.

However, such a model is inappropriate for school governance. Public participation is typically informational; *few* demands are made, as indicated by table 5. Clearly, public

TABLE 5. Types of Statements Made at School Board Meetings (in percentages)

	Demand favored	*Demand opposed*	*Request information*	*Supply information*
Superintendent	22	2	6	71
School board member	26	4	27	44
Staff official	11	1	3	85
Line official	11	2	2	85
Public	26	13	17	44
Government official	8	6	2	84

meetings do not promote an opportunity for demand articulation and response. Such demands do exist, as can be seen from other arenas of public discussion (such as letters to the editor and television coverage), and they rise and fall with the level of controversy. They do not, however, achieve visibility at public meetings. Indeed, as the level of controversy increased, the agenda and discussions of boards became even more heavily laden with routine matters. The norm of unity prevails. It is true, however, that the only modest violation of the norm comes from the public, the only noticeable source of negative demands.

On the other hand, private communications are substantially more policy-laden. More than half of such communications are classified as demands. Yet, because such communications normally occur after agenda-setting and support the action intended by the administration, they are an inadequate substitute for a genuine public dialogue.

After the agenda has been set and discussion has been completed, some sort of decision is in order. Table 6 summarizes this important aspect of participation at school board meetings: Who makes formal policy proposals that are considered by the school board? This is different from the question of agenda-setting because the person who initiates discussion may or may not make a policy proposal. A proposer is the first person who articulates a proposal that is decided upon—favorably or negatively—by the school board. Although most boards require that a formal motion be made by a school board member, this definition of proposal-making is less restrictive. All six categories of potential participants are potential policy proposers.

TABLE 6. **Policy Proposals Made at School Board Meetings (in percentages)**

	Mean	*Low*	*High*
School board	65	25	97
Superintendents	26	1	69
Central administrative staff	6	*	23
Other professionals	1	*	6
Public	2	*	9
Other governments	*	*	1

*Less than 1 percent.

School board decision-making is even more insulated from the public by this measure of participation. Persons outside the school district establishment account for an average of less than 3 percent of policy proposals. In no district do outsiders make as many as 10 percent of proposals. Generally speaking, two-thirds of policy proposals are originally articulated by school board members, and the other one-third by the superintendent and his staff. Clearly, by design or change, the public is insulated from direct participation in decision-making at the legislative action step. As table 7 shows, the superintendent was either asked for or he volunteered a policy recommendation, on the average, for two of every three voting decisions. Table 7 also shows that adoption of superintendent recommendations, usually unanimously, is also the norm.

TABLE 7. **Voting Decisions at School Board Meetings (in percentages)**

	Mean	*Low*	*High*
Decisions made by voting	86	72	97
Unanimous votes	85	62	99
Superintendent position known	66	12	88
Superintendent position adopted	96	74	100

School boards react to their superintendents much in the way that Congress reacts to the initiative of the chief legislator, the president. The basic resource of the board is its representative capacity, yet few boards have been able to escape superintendent domination. The superintendent's professional expertise and control of information resources is a major factor, yet a more fundamental factor is the board's image of its role. As Dykes says, "What the school board does depends in large measure on the board's view of itself in relation to its responsibilities."[32]

Most American school board members perceive their roles as consistent with the values of professional educators. Lipham and his colleagues found that 90 percent of all school board members thought that they should not serve as spokesmen for segments of the community; yet slightly over one-fourth of the citizens thought this was a good idea.[33] Rather than serving as a conduit to channel popular views to administrators, boards define their job as "selling" the administration's program to seg-

ments of the community. School boards fail to assert their representative capacity partly because they find it difficult, and partly because they choose not to.

Supplementary Decision and Implementation

The next two stages in the governmental process are substantially less public than the preceding stages. The legislative action step produces a formal document, which is an order from the school board to school district employees. Only a small proportion of these orders are meant to be implemented immediately. There is typically a time lag between legislative action and implementation. For example, because of the academic calendar, curriculum decisions made in May will not take effect for months.

Supplementary decision-making by school districts is rare. A major reason why decisions are rarely returned to the school board agenda is the fact that superintendents, unlike governors or even mayors, do not have the right to veto legislative decisions. The legal position of the superintendent makes such authority impossible. Again, too, the reality of the distribution of influence between board and superintendent makes a veto power absurd, because nearly all board policies are proposed by the superintendent. What reason for a veto could exist? Consequently, supplementary change in school governance tends, more than in other governance situations, to be incremental and technical, involving at most a few central office staff and perhaps participation by affected teachers and principals.

In rare cases of a particularly controversial decision—the decision to close a local school, for example—pressures from external sources may achieve reconsideration. However, such examples—although they create the illusion of widespread conflict—are not part of the normal routine of governance. More typically, supplementary change decisions enhance the domination of the superintendent over the school board. A recurring example is school boards acquiescing to administration proposals to transfer funds during a fiscal year. The entire budget, the district's "master plan," has been debated and resolved months before. The superintendent requests additional funds for favored programs late in the fiscal year when the alternative to increased funding is program cutback or elimination. By changing routine decisions to crisis decisions, superintendents can use a

supplementary decision step to reverse earlier adverse decisions or increase the probability of victory over the school board.

Implementation, as an activity of low visibility that is limited to school district employees, is similarly dominated by professionals. Indeed, it is at the implementation phase of governance that linkages between policy intent and policy achievement can be most easily modified by professional hostility. The most apt example is the new militancy of teachers. Typically, teachers' organizations have virtually no influence on educational policy. As compared to other professions, teachers have been less politically active and more reluctant to challenge the authority of superiors. However, even during their passive period, teachers shaped the educational process within the classroom, the level at which most constituent satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be expected.

As employees of the district, teachers were expected to implement district policy. In fact, they were free to implement or not, unless their noncompliance was so flagrant as to call it to the attention of administrative superiors. Organizationally impotent, teachers enjoyed substantial autonomy in delivering educational services to the client. This is not to say that they were not, if the occasion arose, subservient to administrators. Indeed, most teachers believed that the administration or central office was more capable of making pedagogical decisions than were teachers and that teacher autonomy was no more than a consequence of the ever-increasing growth in size and complexity of the educational enterprise. As districts increased in size, both because of growth and consolidation, supervision became impossible.

However, this same increase in complexity also created an administrative bureaucracy, which in turn created a plethora of regulations that teachers were, at least nominally, expected to follow. As Guthrie puts it: "As school systems grew and came under the dominance of expert managers, teachers lost their ability to communicate freely with their employers, school trustees, or even with the superintendent and his staff."[34]

Alienation from work, as a consequence of bureaucratic expansion, contributed to the collectivization of teaching and the systematic redirection of individual classroom authority. At the same time implementation became less individualized, it also began to feed more systematically into the policy proposal phase of governance.

It is true that money is the primary issue when teachers bargain collectively. Written agreements, which now govern more than half of the nation's public school teachers, also frequently specify working conditions.[35] Both these bread-and-butter items, which have quite properly been regarded as belonging to the implementation phase, have obvious policy implications. Money obviously affects policy formation, even if teachers are not (and they typically are not) involved in districtwide budget-making. Additionally, however, working conditions may be linked, at least indirectly, to policy implementation. Thus, for instance, some contracts include under working conditions the controversial topic of teacher evaluation. Finally, a growing number of contracts are overtly policy-oriented. For instance, contracts increasingly provide for teacher representation on groups that set curricular policy, select textbooks, and recommend educational programs.

It seems likely that overtly policy-linked items will increase in their negotiability. Corwin, for instance, has concluded that a desire for more influence over school policy and disagreement with central level decision-making seem to account for most of the dissatisfaction underlying increased teacher militancy.[36] The more such demands are granted, the greater will be the escalation of demands for more influence. Ultimately, the entire policy-proposal phase could be encompassed in bargaining between the teacher organization and professional bargainers representing the board and administration.

Such a development would not radically alter the distribution of influence between board and superintendent, but would substantially reduce the now dominant policy-proposal function of the administration. Pierce, for example, argues that, while the demand for lay participation did little to break administrators' control over schools, collective bargaining did quite a lot: "It was not until teachers began to organize and use collective bargaining to gain more control over educational policy that the monopoly of the school administration began to crumble."[37] An important point is that the challenge of collective bargaining not only threatens administrative dominance; it also reduces even further whatever policy initiation remains with school boards.

Although, as we have noted, collective bargaining agreements are laden with policy, they are normally regarded as personnel negotiations and then conducted privately. Public disclosure of bargaining positions or strategies is an unfair labor

practice. Hence, not only is public scrutiny impossible; the board and superintendent find it necessary to hire a negotiator. Neither administration nor board members can follow the proceedings. Both may lose control of policy under such circumstances, allowing policy proposal functions to be assumed by people without any vestige of public accountability.

Although collective bargaining obviously is a major problem for school districts, it is a problem so concealed from public or board scrutiny that no accountability is feasible. In our study of eleven school districts, we searched in vain for any discussion of collective bargaining at board or administrative cabinet meetings. When administration assumed control of policy, there was at least the possibility of board veto, although veto rarely occurred. Now, even such weak constraints are removed. Policy and implementation, once blurred because nominally administrative implementation made policy, are further blurred because nominal delivery agents are acquiring policy responsibilities. Thus, the chain of accountability is further weakened.

Review

The final step in the policy-making process is review and evaluation of past decisions and programs. Of necessity, review must follow implementation. But the review process is continuous and for some actors is concurrent with other steps in the policy-making process. Internal review is undertaken by school board members and district employees. External review involves participation by those outside the governmental unit.

There are two major types of internal review: executive review and legislative review. Most executive review occurs within the context of the executive recommendation step, with participation limited to school district administrators. This process is personified in most large districts by an administrator in charge of research and evaluation. There is also an ongoing process of executive review in the context of policy implementation management. On the micro level, principals review the performances of teachers. On the macro level, superintendents meet with their cabinets to assess districtwide programs.

Evaluation involves comparing actual performance with an expected performance or goal. The summary goal of public schools is to educate children. There are, however, a number of indicators of success, such as enrollments, promotions, test

scores, and student-teacher ratios, as well as indicators relating benefits to costs. Furthermore, because many evaluation indicators are technical or extremely detailed, they are difficult for the untrained and uninitiated to interpret.

Legislative review occurs within the context of the legislative action step. Because school board members are part-time, amateur, and voluntary, they have neither the time nor the expertise to carry on an effective review and evaluation program. The time lag between legislative authorization, implementation, and assessment often spans several years and several school boards, which further impedes the effectiveness of legislative review in school districts.

State legislatures are increasingly turning to outside experts to help them review and evaluate programs. There does not seem to be a parallel trend in school districts. School boards do not have staff research support and have not secured experts independent of executive employees to aid them in the review process. School boards have relied on their own limited expertise and the expertise of lay people from the public who attend meetings and contact them in private. As a result, legislative review is weak in school districts.

External review of school district policies involves actors from other governments. As we have seen, participation of representatives of other governments is extremely rare. However, as the popular and professional administrative literature attests, this participation is extremely important when it does occur. Although external review can come from the executive and judicial branches of state and federal government, judicial review is presently of greater concern to school districts.

Ironically, judicial review is, in a sense, much less isolated from the general public than are the steps in the policy-making process that occur entirely within the school districts. The courts are always responsive to the extent that suits are either accepted for consideration or rejected; those accepted are subject to decision. The courts cannot table, bury in committee, ignore, or otherwise avoid the matters they accept for consideration. Although gaining a place on the judicial agenda may be difficult, those who do so are assured that some timely action will be taken.

The well-known result is that minority groups, whose limited access and success in local school districts reduce incentive to participate at that level of government, have requested the

intervention of state and federal authorities on their behalf. Certainly the issue of equality of educational opportunity looms large in the review process. Not only is the maze of litigation surrounding federally mandated busing a prominent example of this issue, but the litigation involving finance also reflects this concern. The defense in such cases usually invokes the principle of local control as a justification for not achieving equal educational opportunity. Indeed, local control has even achieved statutory legitimacy.

Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states, "the school . . . is most effective when the school involves the people of that community in a program designed to fulfill their education needs." But, to date, the principle of equality of opportunity has taken precedence over that of local control. Local options have given way to standardized procedures and programs enforced by the courts.

The other most conspicuous public debate involves the *Serrano* and *Rodriguez* decisions. In *Serrano v. Priest* (California 1971) property taxes were ruled inherently unconstitutional according to the state constitution. The California Constitution requires equal education, but property taxes had allowed rich districts to spend more. However, in *Rodriguez v. San Antonio Independent School District* (1973), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that property taxes do not violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The impact of *Serrano* was widely viewed as one of threatening local control, while *Rodriguez* was viewed as restoring local control. In fact, the former interpretation is more accurate. Federal courts are certainly likely to avoid school finance issues since *Rodriguez,* but state courts are not. Additionally, the impact of both decisions is likely to shift the burden of financial reform to the state legislature, which can expect its remedies to be subject to judicial review. Thus, continued litigation concerning educational equality will have the effect of removing the local board (and even the superintendent) from the policy process.

The thrust of legal challenges, whether financial or with regard to racial imbalance, is against local participation. Because the largest source of school revenue is local property taxes, wealthy districts can spend more than poor districts. Thus, equality of financial resources for education can be achieved only by statewide distribution programs. Further, because the wealth of states varies substantially, the goal of equality may ultimately

require a national system of school finance. As state and federal governments assume more control over financing education, opportunity for local populations to influence educational policy by voting for or against budgets will diminish, as will the opportunity for local administrators to set budgetary priorities.

The courts seem to be moving toward an unrealistic separation of policy-making and spending. The two clearly cannot be separated; the policy implications of reduced local control of spending priorities are conspicuous. Further, there is a spillover effect from increased litigation. Administrators, finding their districts involved in litigation, can seek judicial remedies for board action viewed as unreasonable. Thus, cases of superintendents successfully challenging board decisions not to renew their contracts and lower-level administrators challenging similar decisions (especially those involving reassignment) are becoming more prevalent. The upshot is that judicial review weakens the policy-making authority of all officials at the local level. Additionally, minority groups, who correctly perceive more access to nonlocal (federal) decision arenas, use the review process to augment their influence. Such augmentation, achieved at the expense of local officials, further ensures their insulation.

We have used a six-step model of school district governance to examine the roles of six potential types of participants in the policy-making process. Different actors are eligible to participate at different steps. The process is least insulated, in theory, from those outside the school district establishment at the proposal development and legislative action steps. However, few outsiders do participate directly. Furthermore, at each step in the policy-making process, administrators—especially superintendents—dominate school board members. Empirical data support neither a traditional model of governance from democratic theory, nor a democratic model of administrative representation. Again, the answer to the question, Who governs public schools? is superintendents and their professional staffs.

4.
Recruitment of School Officials

The fact that policy-making in local school districts is almost entirely isolated from public input need not imply that public influence over routine decisions is small. As Luttbeg notes, a sharing model holds that government officials can serve the preferences of the public without any coercion by the public.[38] To the extent that representatives and the public share experiences and preferences, representatives acting on their own preferences also act on the preferences of their constituents. Thus, governments composed of individuals who are representative of the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of constituents are most likely to fit the sharing model.

Unfortunately, school officials do not very closely match the attributes of their constituents. When compared to the general public, board members have the qualities that—right or wrong—are more valued and esteemed in American society. Specifically, they are more male, white, and middle-aged; longer residents of their communities; much better educated and engaged in more prestigious occupations; more Protestant; more devout; and more Republican.[39] Although the fallacy of inferring attitudes and behaviors from the social origins and positions of public officials is by now well established, social characteristics are important in that certain perspectives or *Weltanschauung* are inevitably underrepresented on governing bodies by virtue of their status bias. Thus, though specific decisions or policies might not be attributable to a middle- and upper-class ethos, it does seem likely that the agenda of problems and possible solutions as well as the style of decision-making are affected by composition factors.[40]

The upper-class bias of school boards is hardly unique; indeed all governmental bodies exhibit such a bias. Nor is it surprising that school boards attract a disproportionate share of people who, along with their families, have been associated with education. What is unique is the isolation of board members from political involvement. Because governing schools is part of the political process, we might expect board members to spring disproportionately from politicized homes. Such is not the case.[41] Board members are no more likely than the general public to come from homes more involved in public affairs. For all the

usual findings about the political backgrounds of political elites, the pattern obviously does not apply to local elites in education. Thus, the recruitment process provides more evidence of a recurrent theme of this discourse: the apolitical character of school politics.

Another way we can discern the insulation of school board members is by looking at the positions held by board members before their elections. Most members serve an apprenticeship in public affairs, either in civic-business, political-governmental, or educational spheres.[42] Although all three avenues to the school board are used, the civic-business path is the most prominent. The senior position of civic-business apprenticeship again is not unique, as a variety of community studies has shown. Such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce are prominent actors in the drama of local politics. Yet boards of education provide an even more congenial destination than, say, city councils or state legislatures. What could be better preparation for service in a nonpolitical agency than proven ability in the civic-business world?

Obviously there are other paths to the school board. One alternative path of considerable theoretical interest is the political. Those board members whose careers interface with the community's manifest political process are likely to approach their jobs with markedly different attitudes than those whose careers are in civic and business organizations. Boards with strong political orientations (when they can be found) stand in stark contrast to the normal board. Crain notes that:

> The appropriate model for studying school board recruitment is one of conflict between the two most powerful groups in the city—the political party and the civic leadership. . . . This is simply a continuation of the pressures which divided those two groups over fifty years ago, when the industrial cities of the North developed professional politicians who could use ethnic and class conflict as a resource to compete with Yankee money.[43]

Crain went on to assert that because boards recruited from the civic-business sector were more sympathetic to desegregation demands, they were high on "reform orientation." This conclusion fits well with what we know of upper-class attitudes, but hides some other consequences of recruitment patterns. Jennings and Zeigler found that board members with strong links to the political process (who constituted 20 percent of the members

they studied) are more likely to (1) have been originally elected to a board, (2) have attracted the support of various publics during the campaign, (3) want to institute changes in the educational program, (4) have differed seriously with their opponents, and (5) be more unhappy with the role of the board in making decisions.[44]

On every one of these dimensions, the civic-business-oriented board members (32 percent) ranked considerably lower. Such persons, though perhaps satisfying the reform values of being "above politics," hardly satisfy requirements for meaningful lay control: contested elections, issue differences, challenging the status quo, and looking back over one's shoulder at the mood of the constituency:

> Of all those board members with prior public affairs experience the civic notables are the blandest and gained office in the least competitive fashion.[45]

It hardly need be added that the political paths and civic-business paths occur in reasonable correlation with the institutional relationship between the school and the political community. Political careers occur more often in partisan districts with ward elections; civic-business careers abound in nonpartisan, at-large districts.

Adding to the noncompetitive nature of the recruitment process is the strong tendency of boards to perpetuate themselves. Elections to school boards are only moderately competitive. Only about half of the board members are elected in a contest with an incumbent.[46] Those who challenge incumbents are likely to stress ideological concerns and specific issues as opposed to such symbolic euphemisms as "better schools." Still, most board members can cite only one difference with their electoral opponents, and such differences are not likely to relate directly to the educational program.

In addition to self-perpetuation by default, there is deliberate self-perpetuation.[47] The best way for any elected body to perpetuate its style and policies is to handpick its successors. True, such designees do not always fulfill the promise of their supporters. Moreover, the lone dissident or two might be most active in encouraging others to run. Over the long pull, however, it seems probable that board members encourage like-minded individuals to join them and that those who are successful prove compatible with existing board members. Adding to this probability is the socialization of new members into the norms and

folkways of the board. If the new entrant initially considers diverging from his fellow members, such deviance is quickly attenuated by the socialization process, especially because the new member owes his or her position on the board to the instigation of board personnel. If one adds the activity of the PTA (closely identified with the "establishment"), superintendents, and teachers to the recruitment by the board, about one-half of the members of school boards are the products of self-perpetuation. To a substantial degree the pool of eligibles comes to be those people recognized by local educational elites as potential board members.

To return to the notions of resources of boards, representative capacity and legal authority are underutilized. It is not surprising that school boards are WASPish; what does bear directly on resource utilization is the low-keyed, self-perpetuating selection process that minimizes conflict. Such a selection process subverts the notions of lay control and hence the public orientation of board members. Orthodoxy and tradition are cherished; controversy is not. There is little intensive lay, or group, involvement in elections. Thus, boards emerge as relatively impermeable. The early educational reformers have succeeded too well: politics (that is, partisanship) and education are normally separate. Thus, the superintendent's basic resources—technical skills, information monopoly, expertise—are not matched by an equally resourceful board. As we continue to describe the decisional culture of school systems, the lack of a balance of power between board and superintendent will become apparent.

Superintendents, too, have a clear, even more homogeneous, recruitment pattern. Like school board members, they are WASPish, Republican, and devout. Here, however, the similarity ends. Superintendents are far more likely to have been reared in a small town and to have a lower middle-class background. Very few have urban and professional origins.[48] For most school board members, board service is neither a route nor end goal of upward mobility. Very few seek to better themselves politically. For superintendents, the job represents the culmination of a struggle out of the lower middle class.

To be a superintendent, one must first be a teacher. To survive as a teacher—or to become an administrator—one must learn to understand and accept occupational norms. The norms for teachers—less so now, but certainly so when today's administrators were teachers—are acquiescence, acceptance of authority,

and conservatism.[49] Those who cannot accept the norms drop out.[50] Surviving long enough to become an administrator requires more than an employee orientation. In addition to "knowing one's place," male teachers (superintendents are universally male) have to face the financial and psychological deprivations of existing in a highly feminized occupation. Ninety percent of all elementary teachers and about half of high school teachers are female. It is not surprising that only about 10 percent of the male teachers last longer than five years.[51] The pool of eligibles is thus reduced considerably to those male teachers who, through keeping free of controversy, are able to survive. As Carlson notes, sheer *perseverance* seems to be a contingency of the career path of the superintendent.[52]

It is perhaps here as a teacher, or more specifically, as a fraction of those males that survive, that future superintendents first develop their suspicion of lay control. In competition with parents for the obedience of the child, teachers develop defensive reactions: opposition to paraprofessionals, resentment of parental interference, belief in certification, and using methods courses. Surviving male teachers, buffeted by the tensions of their jobs, tend to become more politically conservative and develop an unusually high need for respect, an exaggerated concern for authority, and a personal rigidity and a fear of risk-taking behavior.[53]

The occupational recruitment of superintendents—coupled with their unusually high small-town representation and working-class origins—helps considerably in understanding their view of school boards, which are usually upper middle-class laymen (even though they reflect the values of the local educational establishment). Given their humble origins and the development of a defensive response to criticism, overcompensation is virtually guaranteed. Thus, the development of expertise as a resource comes naturally. Curiously, the militant defense of expertise comes from an occupational group quite undistinguished academically. Among graduate students in seventeen fields attending universities that grant doctoral degrees, those in educational administration have the lowest mean score on the Miller Analogies Test.[54]

Taken together, these various strands of the recruitment process add up to the superintendents perceiving their roles as "narrow and defensive."[55] They are often intolerant of lay criticism and frequently unwilling to engage in dialogue with

outsiders. Criticisms may be answered with either complete disagreement or with irrelevant replies loaded with trivial detail.[56] For superintendents expertise is not only a resource, it is a way of life learned early and necessary for psychic and occupational survival. Small wonder that superintendents use their resources more relentlessly than school boards.

5.
The Community and the Schools

Although American education is symbolically democratic, various articulate publics have found it to be a remarkably closed and impermeable system. Roscoe Martin, perhaps most severe among those who expose this conflict between symbols and reality, laments:

> Thus is the circle closed, the paradox completed. Thus does the public school, heralded by its champions as the cornerstone of democracy, reject the political world in which democratic institutions operate.[57]

Legitimacy—the key to successful negotiation between school officials and various publics—is difficult to establish. Information—a basic resource in the arsenal of the lobbyist—is hard to pry loose from the iron grip of the superintendent. Clearly, opening school districts to environmental demands hinges on the extent to which educational decision-makers conceive their role as legitimately entailing acknowledgment of and response to such demands. On this score, we find that the mass public, in keeping with its attachment to the symbols of democracy, is disinclined to accept the notion that school board members should follow their own judgment; they want them to "do what the public wants." Although not denying that in most cases the public does not know what it wants, board members typically do not view their role as representing the public; two-thirds of them believe they should follow their own judgment. Even more adamant are superintendents. Three-fourths of them believe board members should be "delegates" rather than "representatives."[58] Needless to say, board members and superintendents misperceive the public's view and assume, wrongly, that it is congruent with their own.

Of course, such usages of various categories of role orientations are well known and well worn. They provide, at best, a clue about linkages between governing elites and public demands. Obviously, school boards and superintendents have some interaction with agents of the community. To get more precisely at the nature of this interaction, Jennings and Zeigler categorized school boards according to the legitimacy and responsiveness accorded to group demands and individual demands.[59] Although it is possible for boards to be equally responsive to both types of demands, in fact the two response

styles are negatively correlated. Further, group-responsive boards and individual-responsive boards differ appreciably along a variety of dimensions.

The conditions that lead boards to be responsive to group demands are those that *lessen* the responsiveness to individual sources of preferences and cues. Boards are considerably more group-oriented in the complex environments of metropolitan areas. Demands originating from individuals receive more sympathy in small towns. The ambience of small towns seems to be conducive to the sort of informal, almost casual inputs of information characteristic of our images of hinterland America.[60] Even if these constituents are formal group spokesmen, they are not recognized as such. They are seen as fellow merchants, farmers, luncheon club or church members, former high school classmates, relatives, friends, or perhaps just some residents with whom to pass the day. The exchange is nonthreatening, and the intensity is low.

It is only when one moves into the complexities of urban life that there is any appreciable exchange between formal organizations and elected and appointed school officials.[61] Not only do such officials have a positive effect toward groups (for example, by according them legitimacy), but they see more of them. However, even in those urban, group-oriented districts, interest group activity is sporadic at best. Indeed, urban districts are "groupy" only in comparison to small towns and rural areas. A sizable portion of the districts are hardly boiling cauldrons of interest activity. To the contrary, they seem to be functioning with a minimum of formal group life.[62]

Whereas Jennings and Zeigler's conclusions about the paucity of group life are based on comparative surveys, Smoley's exhaustive case study of pressures on the Board of School Commissioners in Baltimore provides corroboration.[63] Using school board minutes and some additional published sources, he considered 2,389 issues during a seven-year period. Smoley revealed that interest groups are largely uninvolved even in a large city:

> Of the 2,389 issues considered by the Board of School Commissioners, only 207 included participation by outside groups—less than ten percent! Furthermore, much of the participation which did take place contained no hint of attempted influence, but was action in the performance of official functions to provide service to the Baltimore school system.[64]

Smoley's analysis also provides insight into how superintendents can use their resources to minimize external demands. Superintendents usually set agendas for board meetings and load them with trivia—nuts and bolts problems of administration that neither boards nor interest groups can understand. For example, school board members are inundated with lists of numbers: numbers of students, teachers, administrators, chairs, desks, books, test scores, and, of course, dollars. Since they lack the expertise necessary to form a picture of the state of the school district in personal terms from these detailed data, they must listen patiently to the interpretation of their administrators. School boards can thus be distracted from general discussions of curriculum goals by lengthy reports on isolated elements of the educational program. At first glance, including administrative tasks in the agenda may seem risky, but the strategy is successful. Immersed in trivial administrative matters rather than major issues of educational policy, boards do not provide a forum for interest arbitration. Over 2,000 of the 2,389 decisions concerned staff personnel and the school building program. Only a handful related to instructional affairs. Most issues were routine and quickly resolved. Trivia—skillfully used—is a powerful weapon.

Further evidence of isolation appears when we probe into the distribution of activity among types of groups. The results are unequivocal: the most active voice is that of the PTA, followed (distantly) by teachers.[65] Almost two-thirds of the board members in the Jennings and Zeigler study cited the PTA; about one-third recalled demands by teacher groups. After these two, the list declines through civil rights groups (13 percent) to the rarely active labor organizations (3 percent).

An analysis of PTAs and teachers will follow; here let us point out that most of the interest-group action is controlled by "in-house" organizations whose major thrust is to create a climate in which the status quo goes unchallenged. There is an establishment tinge to the control of the agenda and group spectrum. In addition to their aggressive use of trivia, superintendents have the advantage of an institutional structure designed, as we have seen, to insulate schools from the erratic winds of community conflict. Such devices as at-large, nonpartisan elections minimize the link between public anger and group demands. Although it makes intuitive sense to argue that large electoral units increase social heterogeneity and hence increase group conflict, the opposite is true. Ward elections (a minority

phenomenon in school district organizations) increase the likelihood that interest groups will provide a clearer focus for grievances that are likely to be neighborhood-based. Similarly, partisan elections place the educational decision-making process squarely within mainstream, conflictual politics, thus providing a visible target for interest groups.

Linkage opportunities are also reduced appreciably by the self-perpetuating recruitment pattern characteristic of school boards. When, as is frequently the case, incumbent board members are able to perpetuate their influence by bringing like-minded colleagues to the board, interest group activity (and individual communications as well) tapers off considerably. Boards in these circumstances appear almost akin to closed corporations, insulating themselves from the hue and cry of interest groups politics. Popular uprisings or expressions of discontent come slowly to the attention of the board, because cues are internally generated. Boards and superintendents value a public display of unity, generally eschew identification with group-originated values, and avoid public conflicts. About 90 percent of the votes observed by Lipham and others in twelve Wisconsin districts were unanimous.[66]

The only groups welcomed into such dynasties are PTAs and, less often, teachers. Their comparative acceptance stems from their semiofficial status. The PTA—with its membership strongly biased in favor of the social characteristics most comparable to those of school boards—functions not as a demand-generating group, but rather as a buffer or defense mechanism. It does not translate mass hostility into specific demands, but rather communicates the policy of the board and superintendent to its clientele. It coopts potentially disruptive parents, defusing conflicts before they begin.[67]

6.
The Reform Movement and Educational Governance

Systematic research on educational governance has informed us that the overwhelming majority of decisions at the school district level are treated as routine in nature. Deference to professional expertise is the norm: the superintendent's recommendation is accepted by the school board with little or no consideration of alternatives. Public attendance at formal meetings fluctuates, and public participation is sporadic. Lay articulation of policy preferences is rare, and unarticulated lay preferences go little beyond desires for better education, stronger discipline, and lower cost.

It is no accident that the lay public and lay school board eschew a decision-making role. The institutional arrangements and behavioral norms of local educational governance work to discourage and inhibit lay control of school matters. This has not always been the case. Indeed, it is possible to view the reform movement in both school and municipal government as a reaction against the excesses of a period of too much citizen control. The history of American educational governance can be seen as a process of parental political disenfranchisement.

To put the current state of educational governance in proper developmental perspective and to underline how school and municipal government institutions are linked by a common reform movement, we present a brief sketch of the history of American educational governance. We see three key periods: Phase one, the first period of "maximum feasible participation" (circa 1835 to circa 1900); Phase two, the period of "reform" and "efficiency" (1900 to circa 1968); Phase three, the period in which the school became viewed as an agent of social and economic change (1954 to the present). As we shall develop below, we believe the institutions, norms, and processes of local educational decision-making reflect what is perceived to be the primary mission of schooling in American society. As the scope of the mandate given to public education has expanded, the role of parents and other concerned laymen has contracted.[68]

Phase One: Lay Control

During Phase one, the control (actual as well as legal) of American education rested, in general, with local boards of education. Furthermore, in Phase one, for several reasons community members had substantial opportunity to interact with and influence the members of their boards of education. First, there were more school boards at that time. As late as 1930 there were approximately 130,000 independent school districts; now there are about 15,000. Because each school district had a school board—many districts even had multiple boards—the opportunity for participation by either holding office or voting was substantial in Phase one.

Second, there were more school board members per district during Phase one. For example, in 1895 there were twenty-eight cities with populations of 100,000 or more. These twenty-eight cities had a total of 603 central school board members, an average of 21.5 per city. In addition, some of the larger cities had hundreds of neighborhood boards. By 1913 (Phase two), the twenty-eight cities had only 264 central school board members, an average of 10.2 per city, and neighborhood boards had been abolished.

Finally, in Phase one most school boards were elected on a ward basis and were, by today's standards, decentralized. Each school board member had an unambiguous constituency to represent and be held accountable by. By 1913 most board members were elected at large. Neighborhoods had lost their spokesmen because, according to reformers' plans, school board members were to be responsive to a much larger and heterogeneous constituency.

Although patterns of school governance varied considerably, especially with regard to the problem of division of labor between central and ward boards, it is a fair generalization to say that lay boards ran the schools. Most school board members believed their responsibility to be that of the *administration* of schools. In larger cities, these duties were shared between central and ward boards. In such cities, the central boards were frequently subdivided into smaller committees to manage specialized tasks (such as curriculum and finance).

As school systems increased in size—partially because of the rapid influx of immigrant groups—lay boards found that they could not effectively keep up with the day-to-day operation of

schools, such as checking attendance and recording examinations. They reasoned that they were quite capable of performing such routine tasks, but simply lacked the time. Thus they generally appointed superintendents. However, the superintendent's responsibilities were usually strictly clerical (many superintendents still retain the title "superintendent-clerk") and did not involve participation in such policy decisions as staffing and curriculum. Clearly, the norm of active lay administration was powerful.

It is a well-known axiom of politics that ward-based electoral systems favor the lower or working classes because they generally live in distinct sections of a city. By providing each section with a representative, an elected body can become more representative. That is, its social composition is a relatively accurate reflection of the composition of the city as a whole. Such appears to be the case with school boards in Phase one. Some scholars have argued that the working class had captured many city wards by the 1880s. In Pittsburgh, for example, the school system consisted of thirty-eight subdistrict boards. Each board possessed authority to levy taxes and to appoint administrative and teaching personnel. The central board, composed of one representative from each subdistrict, was virtually powerless. An analysis of the social composition of the subdistrict boards indicates that the socioeconomic status of board members was roughly congruent with the status of the people of the subdistrict they represented.

In addition to achieving representation, Phase one boards were responsive to a greater extent than is true today. Ward boards governed areas small enough to permit personal attention to problems. To modern readers familiar with the late 1960s argument for community control, such a system may seem ideal. A lay board, responsible to a small constituency and able to give personal attention to individual needs, governed education. Who could object?

Reformers objected, and the reform movement in urban politics (Phase two) marked the beginning of the decline of lay control. Before turning to Phase two, we should note that the reformers' objections to the nineteenth-century pattern of community control were not without substance. The ward-board electoral system shared all the advantages and disadvantages of the urban political machines of the era. Urban machines, in performing the function of integrating the millions of immi-

grants into political life, rewarded votes with jobs. Because most local school districts were coterminous with municipal wards, there was naturally a substantial amount of patronage in awarding teaching and administrative positions.

The currency of political machines was patronage, and, in those cities in which machines dominated school politics, patronage played a major role in the schools. On the positive side, political machines were acutely sensitive to the potential alienation of the various ethnic minorities that formed the majority coalition. In New York, Boss Tweed's ward board of education, for example, did not bother to enforce Protestant values in Catholic neighborhoods, allowed the various native tongues to be taught, and removed textbooks that contained alleged slurs about immigrant groups. Tweed's school system sounds like the promised land to modern critics who decry the loss of cultural identity among minority groups.

On the negative side, machines were—as the reformers charged—corrupt. They siphoned off funds from building contracts, awarded contracts on the basis of political influence rather than competitive bidding, allowed bribery by textbook salesmen, and in general behaved like machines are alleged to have behaved. Teachers had to pay machine functionaries for positions, and academic qualifications played a minor role. Thus, school politics, like the machine politics of the urban area of which it was a part, provided responsiveness *and* corruption. Nevertheless, school policy-making reflected the values of the subgroups within the community. In working-class areas, working-class values prevailed. In upper-class areas, upper-class values prevailed. In any case, the people, for better or worse, were not excluded from making educational policy.

The institutions and decision-making norms of Phase one reflected the mandate common to urban educational and municipal governance at that time: provide educational goods and services as inducements for support of the governing political machine. As a Chicago machine boss once said of the machine in that city, it is "just like any sales organization trying to sell its product."[69] Schooling was exchanged with ethnic and racial interest groups for votes. Thus, local autonomy was a material inducement for groups, analogous to Thanksgiving turkeys used to "buy" individual votes.

The mandate of public education was to be a social service traded by political machines for mass electoral support. Local

control meant flexibility and responsiveness to lay preferences. Inevitably, however, the content and quality of public education were highly variable. Ironically, public education in Phase one was in great measure a private benefit provided to and largely controlled by local communities.

Phase Two: Control by Local Professionals

The political reform movement that began around the beginning of the twentieth century can be described as one of WASP elite response to lay control. By fostering major structural changes in the governing structure of cities and school districts, the movement was consciously designed to reduce mass lay influence over public affairs. It was clearly a class-based movement to shift the response of government from laymen to experts, and it succeeded.[70]

The philosophical key to the reform ideology was the belief that there existed an identifiable "public interest" that pertained to the city or school district "as a whole" and that should always prevail over competing, partial (and usually private) interests.

> Local government entailed simply the businesslike management of essential public services. The task of discovering the content of the public interest was thus a technical rather than a political one. What was necessary was to put affairs entirely in the hands of the few who were "best qualified," persons whose training, experience, natural ability, and devotion to public service equipped them best to manage the public business. The best qualified men would decide "policy" and leave its execution ("administration") to professionals ("experts") who would work under the direction of an executive (mayor or manager) in whom authority over administration would be highly centralized. Interference in the management of public affairs, especially attempts to assert private or other partial interests against the public interest would not be tolerated.[71]

The "public interest" mandate assigned to public education by reformers was the homogenization of a diverse and growing immigrant population. Schooling was to infuse the population with minimum basic skills and a consistent set of values. In short, schools were to produce the prerequisites of a cohesive society. The problem was comparable to the problem of new nations of today: how to create a nation from disparate groups

with only a tenuous identification with the concept of a nation. In this situation, it was reasonable to replace community control of schools, which did not homogenize, with a central administration, which could. As the late V. O. Key remarked, "All national educational systems indoctrinate the oncoming generation with the basic outlook and values of the political order."[72]

The educational reform movement's major structural modifications were (1) the centralization of school administration, to be accomplished both by the destruction of the authority of community boards and by merging small districts into larger ones; (2) the substitution of a smaller central board, elected at large, for the large, ward-based central board; (3) the election of board members by nonpartisan ballots; and (4) the separation of board elections from other municipal and state elections. The major philosophical thrust behind these structural changes was to substitute scientific management for political influence. Thus, a necessary corollary for the structural changes was an expansion of the role of the superintendent, to be achieved by a contraction of the role of the board. Reliance on experts, then, played as large a role in the reform movement as the structural modification to reduce the influence of political machines.

If the political machines, with their strong immigrant base, were designed to give power to the people, the upper-class response was to provide power to *their* people. Although some reformers couched their bias against the lower classes in terms such as efficiency, others were quite open in their assertion that only successful people should serve on school boards. Such people, presumably from businesses and professions, could be expected to defer to the expertise of the superintendent. Indeed, an essential ingredient to the understanding of Phase two is the growth of the superintendency as the major source of educational decision-making.

To understand how superintendents moved from clerks to dominant policy-makers, we first need to note the dramatic shift in the composition of boards of education. Not only did they become fewer and smaller; they also lost the representative character typical of Phase one. In St. Louis, reformers were successful in persuading the Missouri Legislature to press a new charter designating the nonpartisan, at-large election of twelve (as compared with twenty-eight) school board members. The purpose of this new charter—a purpose that soon became the keynote of the school reform movement—was to take the

schools out of politics—that is, to remove the influence of the machine. The charter was approved in 1897. In 1896, professionals and businessmen constituted 14 percent of the board; in 1897 they constituted 83 percent of the board. By 1927, the year of the first systematic national survey of the origins of board members, the St. Louis pattern was the norm.[73]

Reformers had succeeded in eliminating the working class by substituting the previous politics of patronage with the apolitical politics of upper-class public-regarding behavior. Upper-class domination of school board members meant that 90 percent were male, 96 percent were white, 70 percent were college graduates, 36 percent earned incomes in excess of $30,000, 66 percent were from business and professional occupations, and 85 percent were Protestant. The reformers had clearly done their work well.[74]

Not only did local boards of education reflect the social biases of the reformers, but their willingness to yield authority to the superintendent—a natural consequence of the business-efficiency orientation of the upper classes—was congruent with the tenets of sound management so clearly a part of the reform ideology. Superintendents moved from clerks to policy-makers because boards wanted them to do so. As the ideological descendant of the reformers, Phase two board members were doing a good job; they were leaving the governance to the experts.

But what of the experts? Where did they come from, and how did they become experts? As the reform movement achieved its goals, colleges of education began to produce and distribute experts in educational administration. By 1913 schools of education had become cohesive in their philosophy of education and well connected with urban reformers. A handful of highly influential educators took the lead in developing an ideology of administration, instilling the ideology in the instruction of future superintendents, and placing their students in key superintendencies. The key points of the ideology—efficiency, unity (for example, minimization of conflict), and professionalism—were welcomed by upper-class boards. Schools, like businesses, should be managed by experts. By 1920, the norm of school board nonparticipation in administration had become so pervasive that superintendents protested lay influence, which would have been customary before the turn of the century, as encroachment.

As schools grew larger and more complex, an administrative

structure equal to the task was generated. First, the boards acquiesced in the superintendent's influence; then boards acquiesced in the superintendent's delegation of authority to middle-level administrators. The expert appointed more experts. Boards of education found nothing objectionable. By the 1960s, the average school district employed 150 administrators. This professional staff administers the largest and most costly governmental activity in most communities, and consequently the position of the superintendent is, in comparison to his local counterparts, visible and prestigious. By way of contrast, most people cannot name anything their school board has done in the last year. Most do not identify the board as responsible for public representation within the school system, and a substantial minority (44 percent) do not think school boards have legal authority over school administrators.

Such confusion is reflected in the behavior of board members. Most board members do not view their role as representing, or speaking for, the public: rather they view their role as speaking *for* the administration *to* the public. Such views are a natural consequence of reform. Lacking a constituency (as a consequence of at-large elections) and lacking a systematic recruitment mechanism (as a consequence of nonpartisanship), they are normally recruited through the civic-business elite, sometimes by the existing board. They view their service as one of the civic responsibilities of the guardian class. Because in most cases boards have no independent staff, the agenda for meetings is set by the administration. Setting the agenda is a highly significant political function, as it defines what is to be decided. It is therefore not surprising that school boards solicit and defer to policy recommendations from superintendents. School boards typically enact policies suggested by their professional staff in over 90 percent of the recorded votes. Such a percentage of success would be the envy of any president, governor, or mayor.

The goal of Phase two was stability, not social change. Thus, the schools, as agents of the transmission of knowledge, culture, and social norms, became conservative in that they served the function of maintaining the social order. However, in the last stages of Phase two, new demands (and revivals of old demands) were placed on schools. From the federal government came the demand (beginning with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, but not achieving full articulation until the mid-1960s) that schools serve as agents of social change. Minority popula-

tions within local communities demanded that schools be responsive. These demands ultimately took the form of the quest for community control and, hence, were not new; they were an inadvertent plea for a return to Phase one.

Phase Three: Nationalization

During the twilight of Phase two the radical critiques of educational bureaucracy reached fever pitch. The proliferation of books critical of education achieved saturation level before tapering off in the early 1970s. As Phase two drew to a close, two irreconcilable sets of demands were being placed on schools: that they serve as agents of social change and that they return the schools to the people. To meet the latter goal was to deny the former, as the major thrust for social change has never originated locally. In both sets of demands, however, the dominance of local educational experts was threatened. The mandate of providing citizens with the educational tools necessary for maximum social and economic equality on a national basis implied the growth of national standards, national control, and national experts. The notion of expert control and lay quiescence was maintained. However, the changing educational mandate called for a shifting of power from educational administrators at the local level to an expanded educational establishment at the state and federal levels.

Phase three, then, is characterized by an erosion of the legal authority of the local school administration by the imposition of federal (and occasionally state) mandates. To place the problem in perspective, the consequence of Phase two was a loss of lay control to the local superintendent who then, during Phase three, lost control to extralocal units of government.

The intervention of the federal government in education has had a consistent pattern, whether the source of the intervention is the courts, the Congress, or the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The national government has intervened to increase the educational, and by inference economic, opportunity of deprived populations. In becoming the spokesman for the underprivileged, the national government was responding to demands that local schools in Phase two could not meet. Deliberately designed as nonresponsive and insulated, they had little communication with established spokesmen of undereducated populations. As perpetuators of the status quo, schools had a

vested interest in preferential education. Hence the federal government, the traditional defender of the downtrodden against the conservatism of local community power structures, took the role of advocacy for the underdog.

Although the immediate effects of the 1954 *Brown* decision (separate but equal facilities were ruled unconstitutional) were largely symbolic, they eventually contributed greatly to the black sense of self-esteem and to a growing dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between the stated purpose of the *Brown* decision and the reality of continued segregation. In addition to providing the stimulus for more radical black movements, the *Brown* decision shifted the arena of conflict and decision from local to national government. Henceforth, school administration devoted an increasing amount of energy to legal defense before federal courts. With each adverse decision they lost the power accumulated during Phase two.

Local (that is, administrative) authority was further constrained by the establishment of desegregation guidelines in 1965 and 1966 by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Legal action initiated by HEW and the Justice Department established a highly visible base of federal influence. But even more important were the widespread but less-publicized disputes over implementation between local districts and the mammoth HEW bureaucracy. The federal bureaucracy involved itself still further with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which doubled the federal contribution to educational funding and placed a strong monetary emphasis on its concern with equality of educational opportunity. ESEA provided grants to local schools to meet the needs of "educationally deprived children" (Title I) and grants for "supplementary education centers and services" (Title III).

ESEA implementation created a new pattern of interaction that made the notion of lay control through school boards obsolete. To compete for Title I and Title III grants, local schools felt compelled to hire more administrators to establish and maintain the programs. Thus, the local bureaucracy expanded to do business with a national bureaucracy. It is estimated that 25 percent of Title I and Title III money was spent on administrative salaries. In one urban district, the size of the administrative staff tripled between 1966 and 1975, while the number of students and staff remained constant. Relationships between the new sets of local and HEW bureaucrats were cordial; the influx of federal

funds was welcome. For example, although audits have revealed gross misuse of Title I grants, such funds were rarely withheld. As so often happens in large-scale organizations, the goals of survival and growth transcended the original purpose of federal aid to local schools. Local experts became responsive to state and federal experts who purported to act in the interests of educationally deprived individuals and groups. Ironically, dissatisfied school patrons often found local experts bound by regulations issued by other units of government.

A key change in the structure of educational governance in Phase three is the potential for dissatisfied school constituents to appeal to authorities outside the local school district for redress. Often the final arena of decision-making is the state or federal court system. The key actors there are lawyers supported by educational experts. The lay school board's role in such disputes seems limited to selecting legal experts to supplement educational experts.

Authority over school desegregation had been preempted from local school districts by the federal government. Other factors contributed to the nationalization of schools during Phase three. Successful challenges to local finance are becoming more frequent, though the issue is far from resolved. The thrust of these challenges uses the same rationale that underlies compensatory education. Because the largest source of school revenue is local property taxes (about 50 percent), wealthy districts can spend more per pupil than poor districts. Thus, equality of financial resources for education can be achieved only by statewide redistribution programs. Furthermore, because the wealth of states varies substantially, the goal of nationwide equality of educational opportunity may ultimately require a national system of school finance. As state and federal governments assume more control over financing education, opportunity for local populations to influence educational policy by voting for or against budgets will diminish, as will the opportunity for local administrators to set budgetary priorities.

Local administrators are experiencing an additional constriction of influence by the escalation of collective bargaining agreements between teachers' associations and administrations. Such agreements are being expanded to include not only salaries, but also course content, curriculum change procedures, teachers' evaluation, community participation, teaching procedures, and grievance procedures. As such agreements become more

prevalent, the range of issues left for even the superintendent to discuss with the board will diminish. As the professional associations expand their collective voice, they are also moving to increase teachers' organizational roles in certification. Again, the authority of the superintendent is reduced.

Students and practitioners of educational administration may well be justified in lamenting the diminished authority of local administrators.[75] It should be clear, however, that they are not losing power because of the routine participation of lay individuals and groups. Lay input continues to be rare. Local officials are constrained by the increasing power of state and federal educational experts. Not only are local officials circumscribed increasingly by regulations from more central governments over routine matters, but they are constrained by the fact that local laymen can episodically stimulate the intervention of state and local authorities. It has not been established that lay participation in school governance has increased during Phase three. However, lay participation takes on greater significance when those who are dissatisfied at the local level can cause an evaluative review by other levels of government. Episodic lay input may be more powerful in Phase three than in Phase two, but the source of that power resides ultimately outside the local school district.

7.
The Products of Reform

The current institutional structures of most local school district governance and of the council-manager form of municipal government were twin offspring of the reform movement discussed above. Indeed, the council-manager form of government is often identified as one of the goals of municipal reform.[76] Municipal and school district reforms were guided by the same tripartite ideology:

1. A belief in the "public interest" that should prevail over competing, partial interests. This belief was reflected in slogans such as "There is no Republican or Democrat way to pave a street." In the educational field the slogan was "There is no Republican or Democrat way to school a child."

2. Since reasonable men can agree on the public interest, government is really an administrative and technical problem rather than a political one. Politics is the art of decision-making appropriate when there is disagreement concerning goals. Since municipal and educational governance issues are capable of consensus decision-making by "reasonable men," both politics and "unreasonable men" should be barred from the decision-making process.

3. The best qualified men should decide on policy and then leave administration as a separate activity to professional experts. Institutional arrangements should guarantee both the selection of best qualified men to positions of lay leadership and the provision of a corps of professional experts to shoulder the burden of administration.

The common ideology gave rise to common institutional arrangements of school district and council-manager municipal government. Six key structural changes were sought and largely achieved:

1. Bypassing party machinery in nominations and elections. Nonpartisan selection of legislators, recall of legislators, and direct citizen participation through referenda and other plebiscites were the prime structural changes.

2. Reduction of elective offices to simplify the voters' task (the "short ballot") and to focus responsibility on a small number of top elected officials.

3. Replacement of ward-based elections with at-

large elections to ensure elected officials would consider the welfare of the entire governmental unit and not merely his own neighborhood or "ward."

4. Longer, overlapping terms for legislators to ensure continuing expertise and proper socialization of newcomers.

5. Separation of local politics by holding elections at times when there are no federal or state elections.

6. Replacement of patronage appointment and promotion of employees by a merit system of civil service.

Of course, not all school districts and all council-manager municipal governments have all these institutional structures. However, these institutional structures characterize the overwhelming majority of local school districts.[77] Moreover, these institutional structures are strongly associated with the council-manager form of municipal government—more so than any other form of municipal government.

A brief review of data on school district and council-manager institutions will serve to document how similar these two forms of local government are. As table 8 indicates, the council-manager form of local government has grown over the past thirty years to become the plurality form of government in cities of five thousand or more in population. Table 8 also

TABLE 8. Form of City Government in Cities of 5,000 or More (in percentages)

	Mayor-council	*Council-manager*	*Commission*	*Town meeting*	*Representative town meeting*	*Sample size*
1951	55.0	26.1	15.3	2.5	1.1	2,525
1953	52.7	28.9	14.7	2.6	1.1	2,527
1957	49.4	34.6	12.5	2.3	1.2	2,559
1959	48.3	36.3	12.1	2.0	1.2	2,562
1963	52.3	38.6	8.1	0.4	0.6	3,044
1967	48.6	41.2	6.1	2.9	1.2	3,113
1971	44.0	47.3	5.9	1.8	1.1	1,875
1974	46.0	47.0	3.0	*	*	6,254

*Breakdown not available.

Source: *The Municipal Year Book, 1952, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976.* (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association).

indicates that the council-manager form has been growing at the expense of both the mayor-council and commission forms, and that the council-manager and mayor-council forms account for 93 percent of city governments.

The reform structural goal of nonpartisan selection of lay legislators has been achieved in both school districts and council-manager municipalities. Approximately 25 percent of all school districts select board members by partisan election.[78] As table 9 indicates, council-manager cities have the lowest rate of partisan elections. Less than 13 percent of council-manager municipalities allow partisan electoral competition.

TABLE 9. Cities with Partisan Affiliation on General Election Ballots (in percentages)

	All	*Mayor-council*	*Council-manager*	*Commission*	*Town meeting*	*Repre. town meeting*
1951	40.6	54.7	15.4	33.3	48.0	20.8
1953	39.8	54.6	15.6	34.3	52.9	25.0
1957	39.0	56.0	15.0	37.0	49.0	20.0
1959	39.0	56.0	16.0	39.0	55.0	23.0
1963	36.0	51.0	16.0	37.0	46.0	24.0
1967	35.1	50.8	17.7	30.5	43.5	39.3
1974	24.5	35.8	12.8	17.4	41.2	34.3

Source: *The Municipal Year Book, 1952, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1976.* (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association).

Ward-based election of legislative officials has been curtailed in both school districts and municipal governments. About 73 percent of school districts have pure, at-large elections.[79] Of the forty-nine largest cities surveyed by the National School Boards Association, 82 percent of school districts that elect board members do so on an at-large basis.[80] Three-fourths of council-manager governments have elected city council members on an at-large basis consistently over the last quarter century. That rate is exceeded only by minor forms of municipal government (table 10). The proportions of at-large elections of school board members and council-manager city councilmen are virtually identical.

TABLE 10. Form of Government and At-Large Election of City Council (in percentages)

	All cities	*Mayor-council*	*Council-manager*	*Commission*	*Town meeting*	*Repre. town meeting*
1951	59	39	74	99	98	100
1953	59	38	74	99	96	96
1957	59	37	75	97	92	88
1959	59	37	74	96	94	92
1963	61	44	76	95	92	83
1967	68	52	81	90	95	79
1971	68	58	76	91	80	*
1975	66	55	74	90	86	*

*Data not available.

Source: *The Municipal Year Book, 1952, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976.* (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association).

The reform movement sought to increase the expertise of lay legislators by instituting long terms of office. A parallel reform—staggered terms of office—was sought both to ensure continuing expertise in the legislature and to insulate the legislature from constant electoral battle. The expertise argument holds that elections are exercises that distract officials from their policy-making duties. Infrequent elections allow officials to build up expertise and to base their decisions on expertise rather than political considerations. Staggered terms provide for a carryover of experienced leaders who can pursue current policy concerns and initiate and guide the newcomers.

Over 90 percent of the school districts in the nation's largest cities have staggered terms for board members. The median term of office for those board members is four years.[81] As tables 11 and 12 show, council-manager city councils most closely resemble school boards in term overlap and term length. The median term lengths are identical, and the rates of term overlap are extremely close.

A final institutional mechanism common to school districts and council-manager municipalities is the practice of filling legislative vacancies by appointment instead of by special election. Thus, when an elected board member or council member dies or

TABLE 11. City Council Terms (median years in office)

	All cities	*Mayor-council*	*Council-manager*	*Com-mission*	*Town meeting*	*Repre. town meeting*
1951	3	3	3	4	2	3
1953	3	3	3	4	2	3
1957	3	3	4	4	2	3
1959	3	3	4	4	2	3
1963	4	3	4	4	3	3
1967	4	3	4	4	3	2

Source: *The Municipal Year Book, 1952, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1968.* (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association).

TABLE 12. City Councils with Overlapping Terms in Cities with Population over 5,000 (in percentages)

	All cities	*Mayor-council*	*Council-manager*	*Com-mission*	*Town meeting*	*Repre. town meeting*
1951	57.7	56.4	71.9	43.1	30.6	51.9
1953	60.4	57.2	72.1	43.5	28.8	53.6
1957	60.6	56.4	75.4	43.4	30.5	48.4
1959	61.3	56.1	76.0	44.0	32.7	43.8
1963	64.0	55.0	79.0	46.0	54.0	58.0
1967	66.2	54.6	82.2	40.4	86.8	28.6
1971	72.0	*	*	*	*	*

*Data not available.

Source: *The Municipal Year Book, 1952, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972.* (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association).

resigns, the remaining members interview candidates and appoint a replacement to serve either the remainder of the term or until the next regularly scheduled election. Data indicate that 23 percent of holders of elective school board positions originally obtained their seats by appointment.[82] Once on the school board, appointees enjoy the advantages of incumbency: the rate of electoral replacement of incumbent school board members is 34 percent.[83] The San Francisco Bay Area studies reported in the

Urban Governors Series of publications showed that nearly one-fourth of city council members in council-manager cities initially reached office by appointment.[84] Seventy-nine percent of council members who sought to be elected after being appointed to office won elections.[85]

The reform movement of the early twentieth century had an important impact on all levels of government in America. But the ideological and institutional goals were most successfully realized in the governance of local school districts and council-manager municipalities. We believe that the virtually identical formal structures of the two forms of local government and the historical and contemporary values that underlie those structures provide a firm basis for drawing comparisons between them.

The formal institutional similarities of school district and council-manager governance provide the basis for comparing the two types of local government. Key differences in the mores and attitudes of school district and council-manager decision-makers provide the basis for contrasting the two types of local government. Briefly stated, the school board-superintendent relationship has evolved to the extent that lay deference to expertise is such a powerful norm that a school board request for alternatives to an executive recommendation is seen as a challenge, board failure to endorse a superintendent recommendation is seen as a vote of no confidence, and uninvited public participation at any stage of the decision-making process is seen as pathological. In contrast, city council members hold to the initial reform notion of the separation of policy and administration; their expectations are for the city manager to play a limited and subordinate policy role. City managers hold to a broader and more active conception of their own role, however. Since they cannot dominate city councils to the extent that superintendents dominate school boards, they employ various political strategies when possible to realize their own policy-making role perception.

A major finding of the Zeigler and Jennings with Peak (1974) study was that superintendents dominate school boards because boards want them to. School board members do not see their role as a lay policy-making and oversight body. Rather, they see educational professionals as the proper source of policy. The proper school board role is that of legitimating administrators' decisions and communicating school district policy from professional employees to school district citizens. Thus, the predominant flow of communications is from experts to lay citizens

through the lay legislative body. Of course this direction is the opposite of that posited by representative democratic theory.

Subsequent research at the Center for Educational Policy and Management and elsewhere discussed above has documented the typical routine interrelationship of citizens, school boards, and educational administrators. The sources of overwhelming lay deference to professional expertise are to be found in the socialization of educational administrators and school board members.

City managers and city council members experience significantly different socialization. Prewitt (1970) found that socialization of city council members is minimal.[86] The "prior experiences" of city council members are their most important role cues. Prewitt confirms the success of the reform movement in attracting "the best man" to city council positions. The predominance of businessmen on city councils is a consequence of the subtle self-selection and selection patterns operating among that stratum of the population that provides citizens from whom leaders are selected.[87]

Loveridge (1971) documents that city council members have been little influenced by the views held by city managers on professionalism promulgated by the International City Managers Association. Indeed, Loveridge finds the notably different conceptions of the policy role of the city manager to be the major conflict between managers and councils:

> Striking disagreements exist between managers and councilmen on what the city manager should do on policy matters. City managers largely hold the policy values of the political executive—they are interested in formulating and defining the purpose of city government. City councilmen, for the most part, regard the city manager as their man in city hall who administers the city and who is on tap for advice, information, and recommendations. The extent of this conflict in role interpretation is perhaps best demonstrated by the responses of managers and councilmen to identical questions on the limits and directions of the manager's policy role.
>
> The differences in responses on selected policy activities illustrate the kind and extent of potential conflict between managers and councilmen. Many of these disagreements center on the fundamental character of the city manager's participation in the policy process and, as such, cannot be dismissed as unimportant role differences. Rather, the results

> suggest that managers and councilmen often subscribe to two nearly mutually exclusive conceptions of the policy role.[88]

As do Prewitt and others, Loveridge finds the policy role conflicts rooted in different personal and professional socialization experiences. It is worthwhile to quote Loveridge at length on his explanations for the policy role conflicts between managers and council members.

> The major policy role conflicts that exist between managers and councilmen are rooted in personal and positional differences. Three such differences call for discussion. First, recruitment and socialization patterns are markedly dissimilar. City managers are self-recruited in college for a career in public service, many receive academic training in public administration, and almost all spend some years as an apprentice in city management. These experiences foster commitments to the public interest and to a self-image as a policy maker. Most managers hope to make a difference in the community—and a difference usually requires active intervention in city government. For example, one manager expressed the wish of many when he indicated that if he had his way, he would bulldoze the entire city into San Francisco Bay and begin again. And this time, he emphasized, he would remedy the aesthetic, transportation, and functional problems he could not now resolve. By contrast, councilmen are elected and must perform within the traditional customs, interests, and ideology of a specific community. The policy values that result often call for a commitment to the status quo, with few councilmen taking strong exception to the situation in which they find themselves. In almost every community, there is, in brief, a new guard (most city managers and some councilmen) advocating change and the old guard (most city councilmen and some city managers) supporting the status quo. The role conflict can thus center on two perspectives of the proper activities of city hall that are logical outcomes from different kinds of recruitment and socialization experiences.
>
> Second, though closely related to the first, differences in frames of reference also merit citation. City managers are professionals. They are bound by common norms and a code of ethics to make decisions in the public interest. Few managers feel their primary responsibility is to represent and promote the interests of councilmen. Rather, most managers share a cosmopolitan outlook focused primarily on a set of pro-

> fessional standards. These values are accentuated by detailed information, staff pressures, awareness of problems—local and national—and short tenure. The councilmen, by contrast, are amateurs. Their policy interests are typically local in orientation and particularistic in emphasis. The manager is conceived as a well-paid employee, expected to give unrequited loyalty to the city, to be governed by the directives of the council, and to accept the policy hopes and goals of councilmen—"city managers should be on tap and not on top." To recapitulate, the policy role conflicts between managers and councilmen can be partly explained by important differences in recruitment, socialization, and the frames of reference that result.
>
> The most important differences that account for the clashing role interpretations can be found in the tasks for which managers and councilmen are held accountable. In effect, managers are expected to recognize and take up the problems of the city. No matter what the rulebook says, the city managers have most of the responsibilities of an elected chief executive. Success or failure depends on the city's approach to problems, and inexorably this requires the manager to provide policy innovation and leadership. No one in the city has more public time, information, access, or visibility, and these factors thrust the manager forward to stand on his policy record. Circumstances literally require a manager to take an active as opposed to a passive view of the policy role.
>
> City councilmen, on the other hand, are formally awarded the symbols and prerogatives of policy making. Sanctioned by law, rhetoric, and procedures, councilmen are the people's legal representatives and the city's legitimate makers of public decisions. They often campaign and are usually attacked on policy and not administrative matters. The policy decisions of the city are the ultimate responsibility of the council for which members have to answer to special interests as well as the general public. Thus, councilmen see the city manager in terms of services he can or should render for the council. In essence, therefore, the tasks for which managers (resolving problems) and councilmen (making policy) are held accountable make policy role conflicts unavoidable.[89]

"Professionalism" as a key difference between executive-legislative relationships in school districts and those in council manager municipalities has been reported by Snow and Stillman.[90] Both authors point to greater levels of "professionalization" in superintendents than in city managers, both in terms

of formal education and work experience.

Thus, the milieu of council-manager decision-making is more explicitly political than that of superintendent-school board decision-making. City managers routinely engage in political exchanges with lay council members and lay groups and individuals from the community.[91] Thus, municipal decision-makers regard disagreement as normal, lay participation as legitimate, and compromise as acceptable. School district decision-makers regard consensus as normal, lay preferences as largely irrelevant, and compromise and other manifestations of political behavior as anathema.

We know that the overwhelming majority of decisions made by school districts are in the preferred mode of board affirmation of administrative recommendation with little or no participation by the larger public. However, the rare occasions on which laymen dissent or even question administrative expertise take on greater significance because school district officials regard disagreement as critical and reject the acquisition and use of political skills commonly employed by their counterparts in municipal government. The expertise of local school district administrators is inappropriate as the sole basis of decision-making when an emotion-laden issue arouses massive lay interest and participation. The fact that boards affirm superintendent recommendations ninety-nine times out of one hundred takes on new significance when the one case of disagreement causes a major disruption in the school district. The significance of school board acceptance of superintendent recommendations is similarly augmented by the fact that nonacceptance may provoke turnover in the superintendency. The finding of the Responsiveness Project that three superintendents whose contracts were terminated won school board proposal acceptance rates of 96, 100, and 100 percent indicates that superintendent dismissal may sometimes be a requirement for rejection of a superintendent's recommendation.

Two anecdotes may serve to illustrate the extreme harm that may accrue to both superintendents and school districts when educational experts refuse any kind of compromise. The harm is obvious when the superintendent holds to a position that is supported by only a minority of constituents in the face of an aroused constituency. In one school district that participated in the Responsiveness Project a routine tax levy for school district regular operating funds met with unprecedented opposition. A

number of important organizations withheld traditional support as critics made educational accountability a major issue. Important questions concerning excess physical capacity and increasing employees and costs in the face of significantly declining enrollments were raised and largely ignored by the school district.

A first levy election failed when it won less than 50 percent approval. A 60 percent plurality was necessary for passage, and the district could submit only one more levy to district voters. School critics saw the failure as a mandate for school officials to revise their budget proposal. School officials viewed the levy rejection as a communication failure. The superintendent recommended submitting the same tax levy proposal and undertaking a campaign to educate the public about the disastrous consequences of a second failure. This strategy failed when only 54 percent of the voters supported the levy in the second election. Massive teacher layoffs and program reductions followed when the state legislature refused to appropriate special funds. The superintendent was replaced prior to the beginning of the next academic year.

The harm to a school district and superintendent is less obvious when recommendations win majority support. However, disaffected minorities may be cumulative when they believe preferences are totally ignored—as is easily the case when decisions are made in isolation from public input. In another Responsiveness Project school district a new superintendent was given a mandate to institute sweeping changes. Over a number of years the superintendent recommended and the school board unanimously approved a number of controversial new programs and reorganizations of administrative personnel. Each action met with vocal minority opposition. However, the size of the dissenting group grew as a common complaint transcended the individual controversies: citizens objected to the process by which decisions were made. A growing proportion of the constituency saw the school board and superintendent as unwilling to acknowledge the legitimacy of significant—albeit minority—public concerns.

Ironically, the superintendent fulfilled his original mandate with apparently majority support on each element of his program and personnel changes. Yet the base of support for the superintendent and board steadily eroded. In the classic style described by Iannaccone and Lutz, voters gradually replaced

incumbent school board members with critics of the superintendent.[92] A majority of board members campaigned on the promise not to extend the superintendent's current contract. Undoubtedly many of the innovations adopted under his leadership will be discontinued. Rejection of political procedures—even the basic practice of acknowledging minority demands—seems to be the source of school board membership turnover and likely superintendent turnover. An additional cost to the district may be new programs and procedures desired by most citizens.

Our own research and the research of others leads us to hypothesize that school officials experience more difficulty when conflict occurs—especially conflict that stimulates intensive lay participation—than do municipal officials. We also hypothesize that the differences are rooted in differing mores that pertain to the concept of "professionalism" and to the proper role of experts and laymen in decision-making. We believe that the model of constant and unquestioning lay deference to expertise in educational governance is surely now untenable—if it was ever normatively desirable. In an increasingly political age, school district officials must develop political skills. We propose comparative research on conflict in school districts and council-manager municipalities as a means to that end.

8.
Conclusion

It is one thing to lament the poor responsiveness of schools, their rigidity, and their dominance by experts. It is quite another to argue that these characteristics are unique. It is possible to argue that, given the complexity of political issues in an age of economic scarcity, all governments drift toward bureaucratic dominance. Reactions against such dominance are surely not limited to education. The tension between professionals and the public is probably inherent in all but the most authoritarian systems of government. If educational governance can serve as a model, one would surmise that the tension will be resolved ultimately in favor of professionals.

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Footnotes

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14. Robert H. Salisbury, "Schools and Politics in the Big Cities," *Harvard Education Review* 37 (1967): 408-24.
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16. Harmon Zeigler and Michael Baer, *Lobbying: Interaction and Influence in American State Legislatures* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1969).
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19. Marilyn Gittell, *Educating an Urban Population* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1967), p. 209.
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22. E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, 1960), p. 68. The analogy of the battleground is suggested in Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).
23. The following data on decision-making in local school districts were collected in two sequential national studies of educational governance at CEPM. The first was a cross-sectional study based primarily on survey research. For this data, see Harmon Zeigler and M. Kent Jennings, with G. Wayne Peak, *Governing American Schools* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974). 269 pages. ED 100 029. The second was a longitudinal study that included both observational and interview data. For this data, see Tucker and Zeigler, *Professionals versus the Public*.
24. William Boyd, "The Public, The Professionals, and Educational Policy-Making," (Unpublished manuscript, n.d.), p. 31.
25. Some of these data were reported in Zeigler and Jennings with Peak, *Governing American Schools*. A more exclusive analysis was undertaken by Michael O. Boss, who tragically died before his manuscript was complete. These remarks are drawn from Boss's incomplete notes.
26. This analysis is taken from Boss's notes. It was found that the more a district spends (as indicated by per-pupil expenditure), the higher the salience of curriculum issues to the public. Further, the salience of curriculum issues among the public seems more volatile than with decision-makers. Hence, the correlation between per-pupil expenditures and citing of curriculum problems is higher (0.41) with the public than with the board (0.24) and superintendent (0.11). In suburban schools, fully 77 percent of the public cite curriculum problems, a percentage that exceeds that of the board and administration. Thus, although the education program is of low salience, it need not be so.
27. See, for example, Dale Mann, *The Politics of Administrative Representation* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1976).
28. See M. Kent Jennings, "Pattern of School Board Responsiveness," in *Understanding School Boards*, ed. Peter J. Cistone (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1975), pp. 246-49, for an explanation of this idea.

29. See Zeigler and Jennings with Peak, *Governing American Schools,* pp. 95-105, for a discussion of the dominance of supportive groups in the communication pattern of school boards. Boss found superintendents to be even less diverse.
30. National School Boards Association, *The People Look at Their School Boards* (Research Report 1975-1), (Evanston, Ill.: 1975), p. 31. 47 pages. ED 116 268.
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44. Jennings and Zeigler, "Avenues to the School Board and Political Competition."
45. Ibid., p. 54.
46. Ibid., p. 29.
47. Crain, *The Politics of Social Desegregation;* Keith Goldhammer, *The School Board* (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964); and Jennings and Zeigler, "Response Styles and Politics."
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86. Recall that the Bay Area study reported in the Urban Governors Series focused, with one possible exception, exclusively on the council-manager form of municipal government.
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